UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Theories and Fields of Ethnography

2526-1-F0102R002

Course title

Theories and Fields of Ethnography

Topics and course structure

The course aims to outline the main issues relating to the link between anthropological theory and ethnographic practice with reference to the multiplicity of research fields in which it is applied. The disciplinary specificity of anthropological ethnography will be investigated in relation to the main historical transformations of the discipline, its reconfiguration in the contemporary world and its future prospects. Its ethical and political implications will also be analysed, as well as the interdisciplinary intersections in which anthropological ethnography is contested, redefined or combined with other methodological approaches. The uses and social repercussions of ethnographic work in the public sphere and in non-academic professional anthropology will also be examined. The result will be a plural, open and evolving picture, fragmented and conflictual, in which the effectiveness of ethnographic practice as a tool for understanding similarities and differences in a rapidly changing world will emerge.

Objectives

With this course, through regular and active participation in lessons, we aim to promote the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge and understanding:

- acquire solid and systematic knowledge in the field of demo-ethno-anthropological disciplines
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- identify the theoretical and methodological specificities of ethno-anthropological disciplines and their interdisciplinary connections
- understand the specificities of each field and object of research (methodology, religion, politics, kinship, gender, economics) and their level of integration and interdependence in the complexity of social and cultural realities.
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Ability to apply knowledge and understanding:
articulate the dialogue between scientific literature and research in an innovative way

- apply the acquired skills effectively to concrete problems, situations and contexts
- ·Know how to convey the sense of open-mindedness and the capacity for intercultural dialogue that are fundamental to the demo-ethno-anthropological disciplines

Independence of judgement:

- Understanding the complexity of cultural processes, accepting and valuing different points of view and overcoming stereotypes and prejudices.
- Evaluating the consequences of one's actions and decisions, adopting a reflective and responsible attitude.

Communication skills:

- Expressing ideas, knowledge and arguments clearly.
- Formulate well-founded judgements, integrating information from different and reliable sources.

Learning skills:

- Develop and refine one's own learning methods, independently identifying and constructing objects and topics of study.

Methodologies

The course will be offered in Italian, combining traditional teaching methods (60%) with interactive ones (40%). In the first case, classroom lectures will be supplemented by discussions and debates on issues raised by the lecturer and external experts, both in person and remotely. In the second case, group work will be promoted to introduce students to ethnographic research with the aim of learning by doing, applying theory to real-life situations, so as to grasp the effectiveness of anthropological tools of investigation and interpretation, promoting learning in awareness of one's own limitations and possibilities as students in training.

Online and offline teaching materials

Slide and video projections and analysis of websites and social media in the classroom. Slides uploaded to the course's online pages

Programme and references

Students are required to study the following texts:
Bargna I., 2012, ‘Between Hollywood and Bandjoun: art activism and anthropological ethnography into the mediascape,’ Journal des anthropologues, 130-131
Bargna I., 2014, “Filming Food Cultural Practices in Cameroon. An Artistic and Ethnographic Work”, Archivio di Etnografia, 1-2, 2014
Evans-Pritchard E. E., 1976, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*. Oxford University Press, 1976 https://monoskop.org/images/3/37/Evans_Pritchard_E_E_Witchcraft_Oracles_and_Magic_Among_the_Azande_1976.pdf
O'Reilly, K. 2009. *Key Concepts in Ethnography,* London: Sage

You'll also need to study one of the following books:
Ingold T., 2014 *Making. Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, Routledge, London
Pink S., 2015 (2nd edition), *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, Sage, Los Angeles
Pink S., 2015, *Digital Ethnography. Principles and Practices*, Sage, Los Angeles
Wacquant Loïc, *The poverty of Ethnography of Poverty,* OUP USA, 2025

Or the following three articles:
Lien M. E., Pálsson G., 2019"Ethnography Beyond the Human: The ‘Other-than-Human’ in Ethnographic Work" in *Ethnos. Journal of Anthropology* https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2019.1628796 McLauchlan L., 2021, 'Multispecies Ethnography', in *Handbook of Historical Animal Studies*, De Gruyter Oldenbourg
Kirksey S. E., Helmreich S., 2010, 'The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography', in *Cultural Anthropology* , 25, 4

Assessment methods

Oral exam: Interview on the exam texts covering the topics covered in class for attending students; for non-attending students, the interview will focus solely on the texts on the syllabus. Through open-ended questions, the lecturer will assess the students' knowledge and understanding of the course content, as indicated in the exam bibliography, their ability to identify the theoretical and methodological specificities of ethno-anthropological disciplines and their interdisciplinary connections, and their ability to effectively apply the skills acquired to concrete problems, situations and contexts. For attending students, with reference to what has been covered in class and developed in the group work introducing ethnographic research, the ability to apply knowledge and understanding to the case studies addressed will be assessed. Finally, students' independent judgement and communication skills in conveying open-mindedness and intercultural dialogue, which are fundamental to demo-ethno-anthropological disciplines, will be assessed.
There will be no ongoing assessment. The exam will be held in Italian; students who request it may take the exam in English or French.

Assessment will be based on the Dublin Descriptors. The level bands are as follows:

1.Low level (0–17/30): Not sufficient

Knowledge and understanding: The student demonstrates limited and fragmentary knowledge of the texts and topics covered, with misunderstandings of the proposed texts.
Ability to apply knowledge: unable to verify general considerations on poetics, style and reading effects of the examined authors; only partially able to summarise the contents of the presented texts, unable to contextualise or compare them.
Judgement: lacks critical capacity and autonomy in evaluation; depends solely on information provided by the lecturer or critical bibliography.
Communication skills: Oral expression is stunted, approximate and stereotyped; command of discipline-specific language is limited.
Learning ability: limited ability to rework knowledge and link it to one's own experience as a reader. Shows little awareness of the usefulness of literary reading as a means of displacing the self and opening up to simulations of

realities and experiences other than one's own. This could lead to greater flexibility in different educational situations.

2. Medium level (18–24/30): sufficient – good.

Knowledge and understanding: The student demonstrates a general knowledge of the texts and topics covered, albeit with some gaps and imprecision regarding non-essential details, as well as some misunderstandings in the analysis of texts.
Ability to apply knowledge: The student can, albeit with some difficulty, verify general considerations on poetics, style and reading effects in the examined authors' texts when prompted by the teacher. They can summarise the presented texts in a satisfactory manner and interpret, contextualise and compare them correctly. They can recognise different expressive registers in literary texts.
Autonomy of judgement: Shows partial autonomy in formulating critical assessments, which are often limited to reiterating others' judgements.
Communication skills: has clear and precise expression and a good grasp of the subject-specific language. Aware of the need to use different linguistic registers according to communicative situations.
Learning ability: Displays a reasonable ability to process knowledge and relate it to their own reading experience. Demonstrates a partial understanding of the value of literary reading as a means of self-reflection and an opportunity to engage with alternative realities and experiences, fostering greater adaptability in diverse educational contexts.

3. High level (25–30/30): Distinguished – Excellent

Knowledge and comprehension: The student demonstrates a thorough and solid understanding of the texts and topics covered, and can analyse the proposed texts with confidence.
Ability to apply knowledge: They can recognise, with confidence and effective personal observations, the general considerations on poetics, style and reading effects of the examined authors. They can analyse, synthesise, interpret, contextualise and compare the presented texts, making use of interdisciplinary links and providing adequate arguments. They can recognise the different expressive registers in literary texts and associate them with the situations that are the subject of literary representation.
Autonomy of judgement: demonstrates excellent critical ability and originality in the analysis and interpretation of texts.
Communication skills: expression is clear, rigorous, fluent and appropriate. They are fully aware of the need to use different language registers according to the situation.
They demonstrate excellent autonomous learning skills and can effectively rework knowledge, linking it to their own experience as a reader. They are fully aware of the usefulness of literary reading as a means of displacing the self and opening up to simulations of realities and experiences other than their own. This enables them to respond more articulately to different educational situations.

Note: Students with PUOI must email the document to the lecturers before the examination.

Office hours

By appointment via email

Programme validity

The programmes are valid for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Leone MIchelini (assistant)

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION